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A

Letter to Sir *H. Mackworth*,

Concerning His

TREATISE

About the Late

Occasional Bill.

Upon Four Heads especially.

- I. Whether all wise Nations in the World do preserve the Administration of Publick Affairs in Persons of one and the same Perswasion, in Matters of Religion.
- II. Whether the Admission of any into Employments, other than Sincere Members of a National Church, be consistent with the Safety of the Establish'd Government.
- III. Whether Occasional Communion with the Church, and abiding Nonconformity, are Contradictions.
- IV. Whether Dissenters do not still need, in several Instances, to be convinced by the Author, of the Usefulness and Necessity of such a Bill, for their own Good.

By *JOHN LACY*, Esq;

LONDON: Printed for *J. Robinson*, at the *Golden Lion* in
St. Paul's Church-yard. 1704.

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Lecter to Sir A. Blackw...

TREATISE

Occasional Bill

Upon the ...

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- II. Where ...
- III. Where ...
- IV. Where ...
- V. Where ...
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By ...

A Letter to Sir Humphrey Mackworth, concerning his Treatise about the Late Occasional Bill.

S I R,

THE declared End of your late Treatise, being to convince unhappy Dissenters, of the Usefulness, and even Necessity, of such a Bill, as you in it recommend, for their own and the publick Good; with the Expression of your Thoughts, that gentle Methods, by Reason, Arguments, and good Example, are much more proper and likely Means to win them over to the Church, than Penalties and Punishments; and above all, the candid Assurance you have given, of a favourable Acceptation, of a fair Debate with Reason and Moderation, by any who dare own their Principles, and will endeavour to reconcile our Differences, have induced this Trouble upon you from a Person, who highly esteems and owns that eminent Knowledge, Virtue, and true Honour, you are known to bear the Character of.

'Tis not without some Reluctance, I can allow myself to differ from a Gentleman of that Quality; much less ought I from so illustrious an Establish'd Church, without a sensible Concern; but if a disinterested and undesigning Attestation to Truth, be a Duty incumbent on us, to the Father of Intellectual Light, we are no longer at Liberty to pay

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Complements to Men ; for to act against deliberate and invincible Dictates of the Mind, were, what no Approbation of Men, could at the last Tribunal excuse to us, or any ways now compensate, the secret and silent Joys, which a well-attesting Conscience towards God, can afford. These are the Principles of Dissention I pretend to warrant ; and indeed I know of no Clandestine or Corrupt ones there are, to persuade any Man to rank himself among a Sort of People, so often misunderstood, and therefore reproach'd.

'Tis in Behalf of these directly, I desire to interpose, with a Christian Man of Honour ; as for a People, not so senseless neither, but they may be capable in some measure to understand, nor so wilful and stubborn, but they may readily acquiesce in, whatever the Author can make out to be, for their own Good ; not that it can be prudent or allowable for me, to enter into the Detail of a Business, now pending, before the Noble Assemblies of our Legislature ; much less to offer a Defence of the Arguments, lately used on this Occasion, by the Right Honourable the House of Lords ; their Lordships are abundantly able to support those, if it be judg'd necessary and convenient ; some general Points only, which I conceive not to be essential to such a Bill, but which in Behalf of it, are asserted in your Treatise, are the Subject and Intention hereof, with a Desire therein to be corrected, by a Judgment, more mature and discerning than my own.

First, You have been pleas'd, Sir, to say, *All wise Nations in the World, whether Popish or Protestant, do agree at this Day, and have for many Ages past, to preserve the Administration of Publick Affairs in Persons of one and the same Persuasion, in Matters of Religion ;*

Religion ; touching which Assertion, having bestowed some Thoughts, I find many Exceptions to it in the Instances (as I conceive) following ; the *United Provinces* (though a Popular) are a steady Government ; they have from the first continued to Jews, and all Sects of Protestants, a Liberty, and to the Papists a Connivance, without Impeachment ; however, by reason of the great Numbers of Native and Foreign Papists, it has been of absolute Necessity to them, to confine Places of Magistracy and Publick Trust, to those only of the Establish'd Church ; though I cannot conceive this a compleat Parallel to our Case, for is there such a Necessity from the Papists unto us ? The being present once there at any other Worship, is no Forfeiture ; the Limitation with them does not descend to Places of so inferior a Nature, as is intended with us ; Dissenters are not chargeable with burthensome Offices there, or Fineable for not serving others ; and in the Army, without distinction, as well as Ministerial Offices in the Navy, and others, are allowed. As for *Scotland* at this Day, (a Parallel much nearer to our Government than that of *Holland*) no Sacramental Test is at all enjoined, wherefore Offices of Popular Election, or those bestowed by Particular Lords, are freely conferrable on Episcopal Dissenters ; and such also as are in the disposal of the Crown, are at Her Majesty's good Pleasure, put into the same Hands, and is accordingly done, as I undertake to Evidence, if you Command it. *Sweden* and *Denmark* have happily been all along without Divisions in Religion, and afford no Precedent, as yet occur to me, one side or other, in this Case. *Muscovy* does several ways Employ those of

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different Religions from that of the State. The King of *Poland* has an Army of Protestants in *Poland*, and a Popish Governor in *Saxony*. The Elector Palatine suffers Protestants in his Army and Cities to enjoy Commands. The King of *Prussia* is a Calvinist, who Employs in his Court, and Armies, and otherwise, Men of the same Persuasion, though the *Lutheran* be the Establish'd Church, nay, in some Parts of his Dominions, a Popish Magistracy (as in *Cleve*) is allowed; in most of the Free Cities of *Germany* differing Religions are Establish'd, with Authorities, either Concurrent or Alternative. The Emperor's *Hussars*, and good part of his Armies, are Protestants. *Savoy* has constantly permitted like Privilege to the *Vandois*. *Venice* lately made Count *Bannier*, a Protestant, their Captain-General. The *Cantons* of *Apenzil* and *Glaris* are both mixed of Papist and Calvinist. Among the *Grisons* Matters of Religion are in like Condition. As to *France*, allowing the Quotation of *Henry III*; his Successor *Henry IV*. (esteem'd in his Measures wiser) allowed, by express Article, in the Celebrated Edict of *Nants*, (which was verified by all the Parliaments in the Kingdom) the Protestants to enjoy the Benefit of Offices, in the Camp, Court, and Judicatures; which Privilege was also continued to them, all the Reign of *Lewis the XIII*. so far, that the Prince of *Conde*, the Duke of *Bouillon*, and Constable *Lefdigniers*, each of them at several times were in high Favour, and Commanded his Armies in Chief: Indeed, in the present Reign, about Thirty Years ago, the first Decree issued against the Protestants, was one to render them incapable of any Offices in the Kingdom whatsoever.

A Second Point you are pleas'd to assert, is, That the Admission of any into Employments, other than sincere Members of a National Church, is not consistent with the Safety, of the Establish'd Government. Concerning which, with real deference to your Judgment, I beg leave to say, I cannot however perfectly acquiesce, for the several Reasons ensuing. 1st, Because in the many Instances above-cited, Experience in several Nations, does demonstrate otherwise. 2dly, Because, ever since the Act of Uniformity, an allowance of the same, more or less to Protestants in *England*, has rather further'd our Security against the Notorious Intrigues of Popery, than it self any ways endanger'd us ; whereof it will be easie for us, to give Matter of Fact in Evidence. 3dly, Because such a Position, That Dissenters in Religion, ought to be look'd upon, disaffected to the State, does conclude us under so Melancholy and Compassionable a Case, that unless it appear'd indubitable from Matters of Fact, I am by no Means willing to allow it ; but in my Opinion Matter of Fact in it self is otherwise ; for during the Reign of *Charles II.* there was frequent Jealousies of Popery, which have been found since not groundless ; but it is undeniable, that in those Junctures, the Dissenters in general, and among them many Occasional Conformists, did stiffly and constantly adhere to the National Interest, insomuch that their Persecution seem'd to many, to rise thence. Under *James II.* tho' they were cajowll'd and encouraged from the Throne, they still pursued the National Interest, and refused to take Revenge upon their former Prosecutors, but adhered to the Church in her Distress, and at length, none more hearty, in promoting the late Glorious Revolution ; since which,

which, they have express'd an incontestible Affection, to the Establishment of the Crown; so that upon the whole, they stand now unrepachable in their Allegiance and Fidelity to the Government; and however their admission into Offices is to be seclud, they will have this Consolation to reflect upon, that no Malversation or Collusion in them, was charged as the Reason of so doing. 4thly, As to Employments, we ought to distinguish those of a Publick, from those of a more Private Nature; touching the former Sort, the Right Honourable the House of Lords have declared, That the Test Act does manifestly and indisputably comprehend, all the considerable Offices, and Employments of Publick Trust in the Kingdom, in which the Secutity of the Government may be concern'd; taking so much therefore for granted, lest it should be thought, the Dissenters were contending for Power and Dominion, whatever my Private Opinion be, I shall be silent, and resign (as becomes) entirely to the Judgment of our Legislators: But here I do avow my Weakness to think, that there may be Offices in Corporation-Towns, of so Inferior and Private a Nature, that though the Possession of some such, may be competent to preserve to Dissenters, in some degree, a quiet and secure Cohabitation with their Neighbours there; yet those are not so considerable, as (supposing even ill Designs in the Possessors) to threaten Dangers to the State, which I take to be also declared by the Right Honourable the House of Lords; those Consequences are not apprehended, from the Offices burdensome of Churchwarden, Constable, Overseer and Surveyors, which, for ought I know, may

may carry as much Influence in them, as several of the beneficial ones, they are excluded from.

Thirdly, You seem, Sir, to affirm positively, That *Occasional Communion with the Church, and abiding Nonconformity, are Contradictions*; on which Account, those who have used it cannot in your Opinion be allowed, for *Consciencious Dissenters*, but otherwise are judged, for *Tools of Deist and Socinian Politicians*; Men, who for their private Profits would overturn all Laws and Establishments whatsoever; Men, who have an Arbitrary, Dispensing, Power in their Consciences; who without Remorse can abandon and counter-act their own Principles; and Men, whom their very Brethren do constantly and generally refuse to entrust for Executors or Guardians. This indeed, Sir, is a heavy Charge, and if it were satisfactorily made out, and the great Contest in the Nation appear'd to me (as it seems to you) in a Way to be reduced to this single Contention, whether such Men as these, and those, of what Denomination soever, (that are most for Liberty of Conscience in the largest Sense, without troubling their Thoughts about the Mysteries of reveal'd Religion) or the Queen and her Protestant Successors, (with the Assistance of true Christians of the National Church) shall govern this Nation; in such a Case they shall never, by my Consent, make use of the Dissenters as Scaffolds to raise themselves upon, to destroy our Constitution, and extirpate the true Christian Religion out of the Kingdom; the Dissenters in general will, doubtless, take the same Course, whereby all the Arts and Stratagems they can use, to

compass those execrable Designs, may (I hope) fail them.

As I am no Ways concern'd in Interest, so am very little disposed, to turn Advocate of any Persons, much less of any Party, who have done amiss; if the Ministry of the late Reign, did mis-behave it, the best Way (I think) to put them convincingly in the Wrong, will be by a more secure and quiet Administration, for (as a late polite Author has well said) it does not so much import the People, by whom, as how, they are govern'd; but as to these high Affairs, it is not our present Business to insist; I heartily wish, the Conclusion of this War may be, a stable Security to the Liberties of *Europe*, and to the Religion and Government of *England* in particular; in the mean time, I wish also you may not be mistaken in the Conclusion, *that this Bill* (if it passes) *will remove the Causes of all our Fears, and of all our Divisions*; for I am truly ignorant of the dismal Injuries here cited, and also of the Persons who have done them, and especially of the Damage, which such an Occasional Conformity, as the ~~Remedy~~ is proposed for, has done to the Government in Church or State.

But to the Point in Hand; Occasional Communion with the Church (called Conformity) and abiding Nonconformity, are not, in my Opinion, to be esteem'd Contradictions; because such Communion, in the use of it, cannot be thought necessarily to imply and carry with it, an Assent and Consent to the Discipline, Worship and Rituals, of the Church; so much indeed is required, and more, to constitute a Ministerial Conformity, but that the Communion of Laymen does
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include the same, is what does not yet appear to me, or that the Law enjoining the Sacrament does, intend it should; when the Sence of our Parliament appears, that the Communion enjoined ought to extend so far, then such a Declaration required, would infallibly set the Matter to Rights for the future; no Man after it would have the Face still to adhere to Conventicles; but when receiving the Communion, was never in common Acceptation, understood yet so, how is it, Sir, that you conceive such a Communion, and abiding Nonconformity, to be Contradictions? If the Terms of that Communion, had been apprehended to carry with it a full Consent to all Things in the Church, the Subject, no doubt, of your Complaints had been prevented, and the Trouble of your Concern in this Matter, for the Good of Dissenters. The accidental Communion of Dissenters with the Church, is not therefore contradicting their own Principles, or giving up their own Cause, but is built upon such Principles as these following. 1. That however there may be something amiss, yet the Communion-Service requires nothing sinful from its Attendants. 2. The Case being such, they allow the Publick for a true Church, and esteem her a considerable Member of the Holy, Universal, One, (though their own Communion be conceiv'd Purer, more for Edification, and of exacter Discipline) hence it is, that the moderate Conformists have not only openly asserted, the Lawfulness of Communicating sometimes with the Church of *England*, but advised it too, as Mr. *Baxter* in his *Cure of Church Divisions*, and others. 3. Many of the Dissenters have really practiced it, as a part of the Communion of Saints, and a Bond of Union to the Body,
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of the Holy Catholick Church, among whom the Writer is not ashamed or afraid to own himself one; and why (pray!) Prejudice aside, is it not an Expression of Christian Charity? What can be more effectual to abolish Parties? And evincing, that he loves good Men, of what Denomination soever? 4. In the Primitive Ages of Christianity they say, there was, under Variety of Administrations, an illustrious Union of Affections; Light and Love were not so disjointed; Humility made them willing, to stoop mutually to one another; but is the Report hereof to be disown'd, or has that One, Uniting, Spirit, the Coelestial Dove, withdrawn from this Relapsed and Apostate World.

You see, Sir, on what Principles, many of the Dissenters, have all along, entertained Communion with the Church; and if they are such as deserve severe Censures, we must be content; I wish the Church of *England* may never have a greater Blemish on it; but if any Men, acted by other Motives, have departed from their own Professions and avowed Tenets, and like hungry Dogs, fasten'd upon the Carrion of this World, we plead not for such; if being in Office, they have counteracted the National Interest, or done any of those unwarrantable Things, you have imputed to them, by common Consent, let them be flung overboard; in the mean time we demur to the Truth of those Facts, either in their Motives or Behaviour, till they are made more evident; and if any good Christians, differing from the National Church, have communicated upon no other Principles, than the abovemention'd, those alone we do defend; the having:

having an Office, does not in it self make them guilty ; for at that rate, what Government can be safe ?

Fourthly, Whereas *your Zeal for the Establish'd Church, does from the very Principles thereof, rather encrease than diminish your Charity to Dissenters ; and the End of your Treatise is, to Convince them, of the Usefulness, nay, even Necessity, of such a Bill, for their own, as well as the Publick Good ;* but Hypocrisie is so nauseous a thing, in the sight of God or Man, that I may well be pardon'd, in requesting further your Satisfaction, in some Doubts, touching particular Articles in that Bill, you Plead for : First, Whether an Injunction of more frequent Communion, and Pious Attendance on the Publick Worship, or a Declaration of Assent and Consent to all things, in the Discipline and Rubrick of the Church, might not be sufficient to preserve Publick Offices in the Hands of her Members ? For if so, then a Test of the utmost Aversion to Unhappy Dissenters, would be a needless Brand of Reproach upon them. 2dly, Whether exempting Protestant Dissenters from burthensome Offices, were a kindness to them, dangerous in any Sort, to the Peace of Church and State ? For such Exemption may be limited to those, who openly Dissented, before the Bill take Place ; and indeed this Indulgence in it would seem reasonable, because they are thereby deprived of what was enjoyed by Law before, as appears at large, in the Case of Dissenters, by this Bill, lately Publish'd ; besides, the Office of Church-Warden seems incoherent, with the Intention of the Bill, because it positively requires an Occasional Conformity, which that intends to prevent ; so

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the Office of Constable might very well be excused, since you say, *The Law ought to take Care, that those Persons may not be entrusted, with the Execution of the Laws, whose Interest (you judge) it is, to defeat and destroy them.* 3dly, Whether Dissenters will be Fineable, for not serving in Offices, the Bill would render them incapable of? For doubtless, all the World will judge this hard, and themselves would account it Persecution, because it is a Penalty for doing, what their Conscience obliges to. 4thly, Whether there be not other Occasional Conformists, who may possibly prove, as dangerous to the State, as the Abdicated ones, who are not provided against in this Bill? For Example, those who quitted Communion with the Church upon the Grand Revolution, and have paid double Taxes, rather than own the Right of it? Whether these ought to be allowed Offices, without open Renouncing their pernicious Maxims, of *Passive Obedience* and *Non-Resistance*? There may be also *Deists* and *Socinians*, who being a Sort of People liable to Temptation, from Temporal Emoluments, as well as the Dissenter, they may be glad still (for ought I know) to shrowd themselves too, among the True Christians of the National Church. And lastly, There may be some Prophane Despisers of all Religion, Natural or Revealed, who call it all but Hypocrisie, Men who make their Belly their God, and Glory in their Shame; these perhaps may regard no more the Godly Church-man than Dissenter, but will venture to confound them both, (without Distinction) for a parcel of Phanatical and Sneaking Currs. Now 'tis great pity, Sir, is it not? That any of these Occasional Couformists, should be suffer'd still within the Temple,

Temple, to defile that Holy Place, after the Grand Abomination is purged away, unless they can be excused as not Taxable, with that vile Sin of Hypocricie, but take the Sacrament, as Common Jury-men an Oath, not caring what it is?

Having thus finish'd, what is proper on these Heads; I do assure you, Sir, there can be no greater Satisfaction to me, from the Things of this World, than to see a Sett of Magistrates and Officers rise up, who will be a Terror to all Evil Doers; Men who will be living Ornaments, of so Illustrious a Church; Men who will Correct the publick Vices of later Times; who will lay Foundations of Security to this Government for many Generations; whose Vigilant and Sagacious Administration, shall constantly countermine the Intrigues of *France*; whose effectual fervent Prayers, shall Contribute with their Swords, to Defeat the Enemy; in all which, I am sure, we are perfectly agreed, and therefore I beg your Permission, to conclude with the Memorable Words of your Preface; that my desire is the same (as yours in writing was) *not to keep up, but reconcile, our Differences, not to promote Parties and Factions, but Peace and Unity, nor for the sake of any Private End or Interest whatsoever* (having never had any Place) *but for the sake of Truth, and for the General Good of our Native Country*; on which account I hope, for your Favourable Acceptation hereof, it being very much in my desire, to be without any Reserve,

S I R,

Your Servant

Bloomsbury, December,
the 6th. 1703.

at Command,

F I N I S.

John Lacy.

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It might be said that the Holy Spirit and the Church
 Abandoning the world, and leaving the world
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